2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

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342
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Bemba village—Nkula, 1930.
(Ethnographer's tent on left.)

[frontispiece]

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

a centre of historical associations and valued for its fish. To the South-west of the territory the plateau ends imperceptibly, and rivers running parallel to each other open out into ever widening grassy courses till they become merged in the Bangweolu swamp itself. These wide grassy margins which Europeans call *dambos* are characteristic of the rivers in this region. It is not unusual to plod half a mile of water-logged country to find perhaps a five-foot stream in the centre.

Forest trees cover the whole of the 'plateau' except where bare ridges, protruding in many places, show that the main rock floor is never far underneath. From the air the country has the appearance of an endless expanse of trees broken by numberless water-courses and dotted here and there with clusters of native huts and the small circular patches that represent their millet gardens. Natives distinguish three types of forest. First, the prevailing rather monotonous, semi-deciduous, bush forest, which they regard as their garden land: next the less common, tall, 'old forest' land, the relics of a more temperate climate. Here the trees of the upper story are perhaps twice as high as that of the ordinary woodland, so great is the contrast between the old and the newer forest. Lastly, when overlooking this country, one picks out deep patches of green along some of the river courses. These are '*mushitu* forests,' evergreen groves usually treated as sacred and often kept as the burying places of dead chiefs. They are peculiar to this country and are again survivals of a once ubiquitous forest evergreen.

These *umushitu* forests are the only parts of the countryside which do not change with the seasons. Immediately the rains are over—that is to say at the beginning of April—the grass begins to dry and turn brown. By July when the cold weather has well set in the leaves begin to come off the trees. By the end of August spring has come and with it the new leaf growth. As a natural protection from the hot sun, which immediately follows the month of early spring, the new leaves sprout in various shades of scarlet, turning to brilliant green as they grow. Each species changes at a slightly different time, and by mid-September the woodland is a mass of vivid colours of varying shades. This is cut short by the forest fires, and in a day the gay tints of spring and early summer are changed to blacks and browns. Even before the first rains of November the new green grass begins to shoot up along the river margins and the

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

•137 trees that have not been checked by the late fires continue to put on new green leaves. By mid-rains grass and undergrowth has sprung up higher than a man's head and the bush looks quite impenetrable a few yards ahead. Young shoots stand a foot or two high all over the motor tracks. With the turn of the cold weather the country dries up once more. Dust lies six inches deep along the roads and coats the leaves and branches of the trees about 500 yards each side.

487 Access to the Bemba country has always been easy, at any rate along its western and southern borders. The history of the country is one of a series of invasions from the Katanga Basin to the west up the big rivers such as the Luapula. One of the main Arab trade-routes also passed across the district from north-east to south-west, and this fact materially influenced the history of the people during the nineteenth century. Although the railway line bends N.W. at Broken Hill, four hundred miles to the south of the district, the Cape to Cairo motor route passes right across it, and the natives have easy access to the mining districts of Northern Rhodesia and the Congo. Motor roads (earth tracks would be a better description) serve to connect the head-quarters of the district. But the life of the country still moves in a single file along the native paths, except where a few big rivers and swamps make it possible to use dug-out canoes.

132 The climate is of an inter-tropical type. The country lies south of the equator, but the plateau stands at an average height of 4,000 ft. above sea-level and the nights are almost invariably cool and even cold, whatever the temperature by day. The seasonal variations in climate are very marked. In the hot season of the year, which falls between August and November, the temperature varies from an annual average minimum of 61° to a maximum of 89°. Between 1925–31 the highest temperature reached was 108°. In the hot months the weather is oppressive, ending in heavy thunderstorms. At the end of this time the ground is hard and impossible to cultivate, and the forest fires have swept the country. The rivers are low and in some cases dried up.

The rains break at the end of October or the beginning of November, and the maximum rainfall—is usually experienced in December. The average annual fall varies from three inches in November to over nine inches in December and January. There is occasionally a temporary break (*icilala*) in the weather at

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

dishes they use the word *ukukauka*, meaning to be sharp and acid, like lemon-juice, in the mouth,[1] but very few acid fruits were eaten before the introduction of different citrus trees by the white man. Children eat lemons unsweetened and enjoy the bite of the acid, unlike most Europeans. The word *ukusasa* is used of foods that have gone sour or fermented, like beer a few days old, while *ukululā* describes the bitter taste of some of the wild spinaches which the women try to make more palatable with the addition of potash salts (*ifishikisa*) prepared from bush plants or ground-nut sauce. Sweet foods, in the sense of those with a sugary taste, are rare, though honey is sometimes found and is considered a great delicacy, and the stalk of the sweet sorghum (*icisale*) is chewed by children. The fruit of the *umupundu* and the *umusuku* trees are also sweetish. But sweetness in the sense that we understand it is not a term that could be applied to any Bemba dish, and the word *ukuloa* which is used to translate the English 'sweet' really means to be pleasant or palatable. Sugar becomes almost a necessity when natives have become accustomed to it, and the children brought up in urban areas where it is the fashion to use it, find it impossible for a time to eat *ubwali* without it when they are sent back to their own villages.[2] Strong tastes such as ginger root, peppermint, aromatic or hot flavours apparently do not exist, except for the pepper known as *mpilipili*, which is occasionally dried and used as a relish and described as making the mouth hot.[3] In fact, strong tastes are definitely not characteristic of Bemba diet.

(*b*) *Salt hunger*. Of the special cravings recognized by the Bemba the longing for salt is probably the most pronounced. Salt has always been hard to get in this country, and meat and other foods richly supplied with it are rare. In the old days the natural salt found in the pans at Mpika[4] and crystallized out into roundish lumps was among the few goods traded about the country. These salt balls were valued so highly that they were used as tribute to be given to chiefs, who themselves distributed them as rewards to faithful followers. To a certain extent they do so still. The process of evaporating salt from river grasses is

[1] E. B. H. Goodall adds 'salty': *Some Wemba Words*, p. 44.

[2] It is interesting to note that honey is considered bad for a sick person because it 'makes the heart beat fast'.

[3] This is in marked difference to W. African diets, where most dishes of stew are highly seasoned with peppers of different kinds.

[4] Cf. Appendix B for composition.

separation from the Lunda, the Aushi were led by one Muwe, a commoner, who 'discovered' *Makumba* and whose son Chabala became the first Paramount Chief. This Chabala was subsequently killed in a disastrous war with Kazembe's Lunda but was avenged by *Makumba* who forthwith despatched a famine to the victors who had to sue for forgiveness. *Makumba* subsequently saved the Aushi again in an equally unsuccessful resistance against the Ba-Yeke.(1) The later history of the group in the closing years of the last century and the first thirty of this was occupied with a series of disputes over the paramountcy. While previously the Paramount held both secular and spiritual power - as guardian of *Makumba* - this period witnessed the split of the paramountcy into two, a secular and a spiritual chief. This division of function lasted until 1933.

The *Unga* are thought to be of Luba origin, and to have migrated with the Bemba and other groups in the 18th century from the west, subsequently splitting off from them with the Mukulu and Ngumbu, who later came under Aushi authority.(2) With the Chishinga and Kawendi they form a closely related block. In fact the Unga trace their ultimate descent from an ancestress, Kaundamwelwa, from whose daughters the Ngumbu, Mukulu, Chishinga and Unga trace their more immediate ancestry.(3) Their later history is one of inter-tribal quarrels and of occasional raids by the Bemba when the water-level in the swamps fell low enough to permit land-travel.

The *Twa*, one of a number of swamp-dwelling peoples of that name,(4) seem to have been well established in the area at the time when the Unga arrived.(5) Von Rosen, who spent some time in the area with a Swedish ethnological expedition, considers that they, along with the other groups in the area, originally came from the Congo and were of Luba stock.(6) They were at enmity with the Unga until very recently - 1943 - and as early as 1916 were made to settle at Kansenga outside Unga territory, but throughout the years of contact have intermarried freely with the Unga.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The soils of the area are generally poor, of a thin sandy character, and are covered by deciduous woodland, predominantly of the type *Brachystegia-Isoberlinia*. In the Lake Basin, however, a high grass woodland (*chipya*) predominates, in which very tall grass grows mixed in with various types of tree. Largely deciduous, this type of woodland is remarkable for dense evergreen thickets.

The climate is characterised by a single rainy season in which generally more than adequate rainfall is assured. On the Central Plateau an average of 45 inches per year is customary, decreasing in the east and north-west and rising in the Lake Basin area.

The annual mean variation of temperature on the Central Plateau appears to be 55°-84°F.

(1) Mees and Boone, 1935. see Ba-Yeke.
(2) See Philpot, 1936.
(3) Brelsford, S, 1946.
(4) Anon., N.A.D.A. 1948.
(5) Brelsford, op.cit.
(6) Von Rosen, 1914.

4:Whiteley E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5
Senga

valley, and the substantial stockades of Senga chiefs on which Fraser[1] commented bore witness to the fear in which these raiders were held. 174

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

As stated above the Senga inhabit the Upper Luangwa valley, at an altitude of some 3,000 ft. decreasing to the south. It is a region for which adequate climatological data are not available but the rainfall is probably less than on the Plateau with an average of 30-35" annually. The probable temperature range is from 65°F. (mean min.) to 88°F. (mean max.). 132 133

The soils generally are more fertile than those on the Plateau, especially close to the river, and are of a heavier texture and darker colour. A type of woodland (*Isoberlinia - Globiflora - Brachystegia*) common to the Plateau is found on the western banks of the Luangwa, but the valley floor and the eastern banks are covered with *Mupane* scrub-land, in which the trees attain a fair height near the river but are stunted towards the escarpment. 134 137

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

The shifting cultivation on the sterile soils of the Plateau gives way in the valley, potentially at any rate, to semi-permanent cultivation. Maize, finger millet and Kaffir corn are the most important crops, each of which is found locally as a staple. There are various sequences, from a millet-Kaffir corn sequence in northern districts to a millet-Kaffir corn or maize-groundnut sequence in districts in contact with the mixed Bisa-Cewa groups of the Middle Luangwa and on the eastern banks towards Lundazi. 241

In both sequences new sites are first cleared of trees and the branches and brushwood burnt. Later, in the first sequence, the grass which grows up in the clearing is cut down and left to rot helped by the first rain; this forms the seed bed for the millet - some maize had already been scattered before the grass was cut - and little subsequent weeding is carried out. Kaffir corn may be sown in the following year or, alternatively, in the third year after a second millet crop. A few pumpkins and cucurbits are also found.

In the second sequence, after preliminary clearing, there is less tendency to use rotting grass as a seed bed, but to leave it standing to manure subsequent crops. Millet is planted with maize and in the following year Kaffir corn and maize are planted in varying proportions in a seed bed of grass-manure left from the previous year. In some areas maize may be planted alone and a simple millet-maize sequence carried on for up to ten years. On lighter soils groundnuts may be planted in the third year.

Apart from this groundnuts are normally grown in separate gardens. Small gardens for maize in the dry season and rice cultivation are locally found, as is tobacco, particularly in Chinsali district. Village gardens are not properly found in the area but small plots of sweet potatoes, cassava, beans and pawpaw are commonly found near villages.

(1) Fraser, 1914.

5:Slaski E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5
Luapula Peoples

A grey-brown, richly humic soil, permeable and retentive of moisture, alternates locally with loams and sandy loams. The underlying ironstone beds outcrop in the bushland towards the escarpment. Large ant-hills containing lime nodules are a characteristic feature in an area of otherwise non-calcareous soil.(1) Livingstone(2) mentions hot sources "at which maize and cassava can be boiled" south of Kalungwishi. They are more typical of the country farther north. Among the *chipya* vegetation (mixed deciduous woodland with tall grasses and bracken), now predominant, there still survive on moister sites patches of dense evergreen thicket (*mateshi*), remnants of the equatorial rain forest which must have prevailed in the earlier, more humid regime.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE(3)

Cassava, the staple crop, is planted on rectangular or, more often, round mounds which remain in semi-permanent cultivation with periodic fallows. Rotted grass turf is used as manure. Groundnuts and, in Shila villages, ground-beans, an important subsidiary crop, are usually grown on newer land. Balls of groundnuts stored in the trees are a characteristic feature in the villages. Sweet potatoes, maize, beans, pumpkins, Kaffir corn, are also cultivated in the main gardens. Cowpeas, edible gourds, and castor oil are grown as catch crops. Finger millet is grown for beer. Occasionally accompanied by bulrush millet and cattle melons, it occupies the thicket (north of Mbereshi) and, more usually, the small *citemene* gardens, measuring up to one-third of an acre each, on the clearings in the foothill woodland. These gardens, encountered more frequently among the Chishinga-Lunda than among the Shila, are abandoned after a few years' exploitation. Small *matimba* gardens under early maturing varieties of maize (consumed green), rice, bananas and sugar cane are made on the moist and very fertile acacia *damboes* east of Lake Mweru. These are more characteristic of the Bwile country. Rice plots, particularly exposed to the depredations of birds, are protected by bark rope birdscarers, and shelters are erected for the watchers to keep off the hippo. Pineapples, mangoes and pawpaws are successfully grown in the area as is oil-palm, which is common on Kilwa island. Tobacco, Asiatic and white yams, Lima beans, chillies, sesame, and cotton, are among the minor crops grown in the village gardens alongside the huts. Curcas oil is planted for fences in some Chishinga-Lunda villages. Irrigated wheat is found on mission farms and an attempt has been made to introduce coffee as a cash crop.

LIVESTOCK

Prevalence of tsetse fly, as well as the lack of pastoral traditions, were responsible for the virtual absence of cattle. Lukwesa (1760-1805) kept a few head of black cattle as a matter of prestige.(4) They were neither milked nor killed for meat and could graze where they pleased on the cultivated land of his subjects.(5) Lately the keeping of cattle has been

(1) Livingstone, I, p.247.
(2) ibid., p.270.
(3) Based on C. G. Trapnell.
(4) Burton, op.cit., p.129.
(5) Gamitto, I, p.390.